

## OHIO REPTILES AND BATRACHIANS.\*

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The group of reptiles and batrachians offers a striking example of a case where "a little learning is a dangerous thing." No dependence can be placed in the records of the casual observer—not that he is always willfully erroneous, but there are so many ways in which one can make mistakes in identification of these forms that he, only, is to be trusted to a degree of certainty who has given some attention to the technicalities of the subject. The ordinary observer groups all snakes into either poisonous or non-poisonous, and to the latter he gives the name of nuisances, never thinking that this group of non-poisonous reptiles can be divided into beneficial and non-beneficial. To the farmer, who, of all of us comes into closest contact with the reptiles and batrachians, a knowledge of their good or evil is an important thing. To my mind, the economical importance of these two groups is not to be ranked below that of birds.

For such reasons, I consider that a systematic survey of the reptiles and batrachians of the State should be made. In other States this need is being recognized, and in New York, Edwin C. Eckel, late of the University of the State of New York, has published an excellent State list, which places the knowledge of these forms on a par with that of birds. In Ohio the fishes are already in most excellent condition, and soon the birds will be likewise. The remaining three groups—batrachians, reptiles and mammals—are still to be worked up.

The first attempt at a State list was that of Dr Jarred Potter Kirtland, in the First Geological Survey of the State, published in 1833. In it he includes twenty-seven species of reptiles and twenty-one of batrachians. In the introduction he makes the remark that "no important additions to the class of reptiles can be made." No list was published after this one of Dr. Kirtland's until 1879, when Dr. Smith, of Ann Arbor, Mich., gave the list in the fourth volume of the Survey under Dr. Newberry. In this list he enumerates thirty-seven species and sub-species of reptiles and twenty-five of batrachians—this making an addition of ten species of reptiles and four batrachians to Dr. Kirtland's list. This list—the last general list for the State—was written by a man who had to obtain his information from the list of Dr. Kirtland and what reports were furnished him by residents of Ohio. No exact records are given as to the occurrence and distribution of the forms except in a few cases.

Mr. E. V. Wilcox, then assistant in the Ohio Experimental Station, published a list of the batrachia of Ohio in the *Otterbein*

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*Argis* for April, 1891. The paper is based on personal work in several parts of the State and on the material in the museums of the State University and the State Experimental Station. Several species of which Mr. Wilcox was uncertain as to identification were submitted to the late E. D. Cope, and hence bear the stamp of high authority. This Experimental Station collection is at present in the State University Museum.

Those in charge of several of the museums of the State have been so kind as to furnish me lists of the specimens in these museums bearing Ohio labels. I have gone over the two monographs of E. D. Cope, "The Crocodiles, Lizards and Snakes of North America," published in the Annual Report of the United States National Museum for 1898, and "The Batrachia of North America," being Bulletin 34 of the same institution. Several records are given there of the occurrence of these forms that are additions to the other lists.

From all sources I have found thirty-four batrachians and fifty-one reptiles recorded for the State. Several more could be included from less certain sources, but this number includes only those that have been published or are in the several museums of the State. There are many doubtful species which are said to occur in certain localities, and only collections made in such regions can settle the questions at issue. The true moccasin of the South has been reported from the southern part of Ohio. Such is possible, but it is very easy to confuse this poisonous reptile with *Natrix faciata sipedon*.

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